

if I did not go to him he would think I had forgotten him."

"He—you—he is a convert now—reformed?" stammered one of his brethren.

"I don't know. I'm afraid not yet. But he has noble qualities. He is a friend of mine," the bishop replied, calmly.

Nothing gives one man so much power over another, be he Christian, Jew, Buddhist or pagan, as to recognize in him a child of God who is honestly trying to do the best he can with his life.

The Sunday School

LESSON 4.—October 27

Joseph and His Brethren.—Genesis 45:1-11

Golden Text.—Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.—Romans 12:21.

Lesson Thought.—The best way to overcome evil in the world is by good.

Introduction.—At the end of the seven years of plenty large quantities of provisions had been stored up in Egypt. The famine which followed was widespread, not only thru-out Egypt but in other lands also. It reached the land of Canaan and poverty and hunger began to pinch Jacob and his family. He learned that there was corn in Egypt and at once sent his sons, all but Benjamin, to buy corn. Joseph knew them when he saw them, but they did not recognize him and he did not make himself known to them at once. He spoke harshly to his brethren, accusing them of being spies who had come to spy out the land, and imprisoned them. The third day he released all but Simeon. He was not to be released until their return with Benjamin. At first Jacob refused to let Benjamin go, but when the supply of corn was exhausted and hunger again began to pinch the family, he agreed that Benjamin might go with them. When they were ready to return, Joseph ordered their sacks filled with corn, and into Benjamin's sack he secretly placed his own silver cup. They were hurried back into Joseph's presence and accused of theft. Joseph decided that Benjamin should remain as his servant. Then Judah made his plea, telling how he had become surety for Benjamin's safe return, pictured the grief that would overtake his father, and finally offered to remain himself as bondsman to Joseph in Benjamin's stead. The appeal is one of the most eloquent and pathetic in all literature. Read it. Genesis 44:14-34.

Meaning and Application of the Text

1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

The pathetic and eloquent appeal of Judah recorded in Genesis 34, touched the tender heart of Joseph and he could no longer refrain himself. He could no longer hide from them the fact that he was the one whom they had sold into Egypt to be a slave, and knowing that grace had worked repentance in their hearts, he prepared to make himself known to them. He therefore ordered all his attendants and guests to go out from him. Joseph was in his own house, (Gen. 44:14) but his attendants were present, probably the soldiers who arrested his brothers (Chap. 44:4), also an interpreter, (Chap. 42:23) and doubtless others. The scene was too sacred to be witnessed by any except his own brethren. It may be too that Joseph did not want any of the Egyptians to learn of the great wickedness of his brothers in selling him. This shows the tender regard he had for his brothers and how he respected their feelings. He might have humiliated them by exposure before

the Egyptian officials. He will not return evil for evil.

2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

Either the house of Pharaoh heard the weeping of Joseph or the loud crying was reported to them by those who were near enough to hear. Joseph's house may have joined the royal palace. He was deeply moved, his emotions were stirred to their very depths. Tho Joseph had now been in Egypt for a number of years, first as a slave, then as a prisoner, and lastly as a ruler over people, yet he had lost none of his tender affection, his mercy and love. When such an experience as Joseph had serves only to soften and sweeten his character and disposition it is evidence in itself that he lived very close to God. Blessed is the man whose adversity and fiery trials draw him closer to God.

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

It is evident that prior to this they did not have the remotest idea that this was Joseph their brother whom they sold into Egypt. Again and again they had asserted that their father was yet alive, but Joseph did not know whether he could believe them. (Chap. 42:13; 43:27, 28; 44:20.) They were so troubled at his presence and the very sudden revelation that they were speechless and could not say a word for the time being. The inquiry about his father shows two things: He would turn their thoughts from themselves and thus at least partly relieve them from the terror that came upon them. Then it shows where his heart was. He had the most tender solicitude for his aged father who he knew had grieved over his loss. Again we have a revelation of the great heart of Joseph. The whole narrative shows the beautiful character into which one may develop who has faith in God, even under the most unfavorable circumstances.

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

How tenderly Joseph deals with the men who once so meanly treated him. Surely here is the spirit of the Master. He refers to his brothers' sin, not in the spirit of upbraiding, but of forgiveness. He comforts them, tells them not to grieve for God caused good to come out of their evil doing. He completely forgave them and then asked them to forgive themselves. The Father in heaven, thru Christ, invites us to come very close to him, whatever our sins may have been, he promises us forgiveness if we come to him in penitence. All the hardships and the trials of slavery and prison life had but served to make Joseph the more kindly in disposition. The man Joseph who lived several thousand years before Christ teaches us practical lessons in the great fundamental principles of Christianity.

6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

Had it not been for the deliverance Joseph wrought in Egypt Israel would have been in danger of total extinction. They sold Joseph as a slave, and brought upon him many hardships, but in permitting this great evil God had in his purpose the great deliverance. It is thus that God's hand may be traced in all the events of nations and individuals. He rules and under the benign influences of his discipline and governmental administration all things work together for good to them that love the Lord. It is a great blessing to live under the government of the Almighty.

9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:

10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

He will have them go quickly and tell his father that he is yet alive. He was conscious of the fact that he had been the favorite of his father and that for all these years Jacob had mourned the loss of his beloved son. He will now bring his brethren very close to him and care for them; not for them only, but Jacob also. There was complete forgiveness on the part of Joseph, yet it appears from the story that the keen pangs of conscience followed them to the time of their father's death. We should learn from this story that while we have the full assurance of full and free forgiveness if we come to the Lord, yet sin is an awful thing to allow to come into one's life. It is not easy to get rid of it. When once committed sin remains a factor in our life; it embitters our days, makes cowards of us. Some day we will have to face the fact of sin, come into the presence of the King and Ruler of the universe, and what an awful thing it will be to meet Christ with our sins unforgiven. There is but one way to get rid of sin and be happy, and that is thru the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is too here a sweet lesson for all the members of the family, father and mother and children. How strong are the family ties when rooted in the love of God. In all the world we know of nothing more beautiful than the affections that bind together the members of a true household. All the young people should take this lesson to heart. More and more we should cultivate and develop and strengthen the home affections, make them so strong and true that nothing in this world can break them. The old home should always have an endearing place in our hearts.

Terse Teachings

True love in a noble soul lives thru all the changes of misfortune.

True love seeks the good of those who have wronged us, and for a time may seem harsh.

Sin is an awful thing when once it gets into a man's heart and life.

Some day the wicked will have to meet the God against whom they have sinned.

All the events of life are in the hands of God, and hence good may come out of evil.

Christ asks us to come very close to him and promises us forgiveness of all our sins.

The wicked often receive favors and blessings for the sake of the good.

To Make You Think

(1) Why did not Joseph make himself known to his brethren in the presence of others? (2) What six manifestations of love did Joseph give? (3) In comforting his brethren did Joseph mean to leave the impression that their sin was a small matter? (4) What in this narrative shows that Joseph's brethren deeply felt the sting of their sin? (5) How did Joseph remove the troubles of his brothers? (6) Do you think Joseph wished to hide his brothers' sin from the Egyptians and why? (7) What facts show Joseph's undiminished love for his father? (8) Why should Joseph, ruler of Egypt, care for a worn out old shepherd way off in Canaan? (9) What trait in Joseph's character does this show? (10) Were Joseph's brethren satisfied that he had forgiven them.

Like as the waves make to the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end;
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.

—Shakespeare.